

# The Oxfordshire Mentoring Programme



## **The Journey of a new Mason**

**Before Initiation**

### **Stage 1 - part A**

Getting to know about Freemasonry

Published by

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Oxfordshire



# THE JOURNEY OF A NEW MASON

## STAGE 1

## BEFORE INITIATION

### Part 1A -Getting to know about Freemasonry

#### Section 1

#### Foreword

To many non-masons the mention of The Freemasons conjures up a certain amount of mystery and curiosity as to what it is all about and why are so many people part of it. For the non-mason to find out more about what it stands for what it does, why is it popular amongst all classes of the population (even including Royalty); the moral lessons and the rituals performed is a somewhat difficult task for him to undertake. Much has been written about masonry and its activities, but for the non-mason, where does he start? Usually he makes contact with a friend who is known to be a mason, who will then assist him to start his journey into Freemasonry. But even that friend or a future proposer and seconder may find it difficult to give a full explanation of what is needed to be known. The purpose of the introduction of this booklet "**Part A - Getting to know about Freemasonry**", is to give the interested non-mason, a "one stop" source of information, to enable him to better understand the qualification and commitment needed for his future Masonic journey, therefore hopefully ensuring that he will be better informed to decide whether or not he wishes to join the fraternity. The subject matter contained within this booklet is derived from many sources, from the United Grand Lodge of England (Grand Lodge), to the many publications and websites which abound these days.

The second part of this Stage 1, Before Initiation; named "**Part B -Preparing a Candidate to Join Freemasonry**", is about how to prepare a candidate for his first important step into masonry. It should be a useful guide to any proposer or seconder who may be considering introducing a new candidate into Freemasonry.

# THE JOURNEY OF A NEW MASON

## STAGE 1

## BEFORE INITIATION

### Part A GETTING TO KNOW ABOUT FREEMASONRY

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## **Section 1      AN INTRODUCTION TO FREEMASONRY**

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternal societies.

Its members develop moral and spiritual values by a series of ritual dramas, which follow ancient forms and use stonemasons tools and practices as symbolic and allegorical guides.

Its members believe that these values represent a way of enabling Freemasons to make a better contribution to the ethics and welfare of the community.

Freemasonry therefore, offers intellectual and social challenges. It brings people together and creates lasting friendships among those who might otherwise have remained apart. Its key focus is charity, which enables it to care for its own, as well as for the wider community.

Freemasonry demands a respect for the law of any country in which its members live and work.

In ordinary conversation there is very little about Freemasonry which may not be discussed.

Freemasonry extends across the world. A mason can be a member of more than one lodge, in more than one country. Every member has the opportunity to take office in his Lodge and become its Master.

English Freemasonry's home is at Freemasons Hall (United Grand Lodge of England- UGLE) in London. The library, museum and permanent exhibition are all open to the public and receive about 50,000 visitors annually.

More information on the Grand Lodge website; [www.ugle.org.uk](http://www.ugle.org.uk)

Lodges generally meet five or six times a year, some more, some less. Most meet on a weekday evening but some are held during the day. A lodge meeting is usually followed by a formal lunch or dinner.

At meetings, members of the fraternity call each other brother. The title of Worshipful Brother denotes that a member has been the Master of a lodge. The title Grand denotes an officer of Grand Lodge or Provincial Grand Lodge.

An important aspect of Freemasonry is its support for Charities – both Masonic and non-Masonic. The annual sum raised is about £25m. Charitable giving operates at three levels;

- from individual lodges;
- at Provincial level, where Oxfordshire has established a special fund to support local charities;
- and at national level operated by Grand Lodge.

Masonic funds are generated by masons alone. Freemasonry does not raise money by public appeal and only a small proportion comes from fund raising activities.

The current Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England is his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent.

There are about 300,000 Freemasons in England who belong to one or more of nearly 8000 lodges.

### **The Aims of Freemasonry**

While Freemasonry is to be enjoyed, its objectives are serious and its members are ordinary individuals who share the following aims:

- To foster high moral standards
- To practise universal charity
- To build friendships
- To develop values such as
  - Integrity,
  - Respect,
  - Self-discipline,
  - Discretion,
  - Virtue,
  - Responsibility.

## WHO CAN BECOME A FREEMASON?

Membership of Freemasonry is open to men of all walks of life and of any race or religion who believe in a Supreme Being (by whatever name He is known to them).

It is usual for candidates to be "mature men of 21 years and over", but in some circumstances candidates between the ages of 18 and 21 can be admitted, and a candidate will need a proposer and seconder before an application for membership may be submitted to a Lodge.

People might think that to become a Freemason is quite difficult. It's actually straightforward. We will happily tell people about our society. Anyone who is interested in joining needs to ask ..... you can ask a friend whom you know to be a Freemason, or if you don't know any Freemasons, then please refer to the 'Information' contact details" in *Freemasonry in Oxfordshire* to enquire about membership.

The proposal form requires a candidate not to expect, anticipate or seek any preferment or financial benefit as a consequence of becoming a member.

There should be no conflict between a candidate's family, business or professional interests and membership, nor can the candidate have a criminal record.

There is a process for expulsion for members who commit a criminal offence.

### **Suggested steps**

After reading the various information sections within this booklet, starting at '**All About Masonry**' in the menu listings, and if you are still interested in becoming a Freemason, we advise that you first talk to a family member, friend or colleague whom you already know to be a member.

They will be able to explain to you what they can about the fraternity and help you find a suitable Lodge.

If you don't know anyone at all who is a member, then get in touch with a Masonic Office in your area, see „Information contact details“ in **“Freemasonry in Oxfordshire”**. Write to that office, telling them a little bit about yourself and your reasons for wishing to join. Arrangements will be made to meet you socially to find out more about you, and to give you a chance to find out more about us.

You would then in due course be invited to meet a committee of members from a Lodge you might be joining, prior to being balloted for membership of that Lodge.

All being well, a date would then be fixed for your admission.

# ALL ABOUT MASONRY

## What is Freemasonry?

## An Introduction

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternal societies. The following information is intended to explain Freemasonry as it is practised under the United Grand Lodge of England, which administers Lodges of Freemasons in England and Wales and in many places overseas.

The explanation may correct some misconceptions.

Freemasonry is a society of men concerned with moral and spiritual values. Its members are taught its precepts by a series of ritual dramas, which follow ancient forms, and use stonemasons' customs and tools as allegorical guides.

## The Essential Qualification for Membership

The essential qualification for admission into and continuing membership is a belief in a Supreme Being.

Membership is open to men of any race or religion who can fulfill this essential qualification and who are of good repute.

## Freemasonry and Religion

Freemasonry is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for religion. Its essential qualification opens it to men of many religions and it expects them to continue to follow their own faith. It does not allow religion to be discussed at its meeting.

## The Three Great Principles

For many years Freemasons have followed three great principles:

**Brotherly Love** - Every true Freemason will show tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and behave with kindness and understanding to his fellow creatures.

**Relief** - Freemasons are taught to practise charity and to care, not only for their own, but also for the community as a whole, both by charitable giving, and by voluntary efforts and works as individuals.

**Truth** - Freemasons strive for truth, requiring high moral standards and aiming to achieve them in their own lives.

Freemasons believe that these principles represent a way of achieving higher standards in life.

## **Charity**

From its earliest days, Freemasonry has been concerned with the care of orphans, the sick and the aged who have a Masonic connection. This work continues today.

In addition, large sums are given to national and local charities.

## **Freemasonry and Society**

Freemasonry demands from its members a respect for the law of the country in which a man works and lives.

Its principles do not in any way conflict with its members' duties as citizens, but should strengthen them in fulfilling their public and private responsibilities.

The use by a Freemason of his membership to promote his own or anyone else's business, professional or personal interests is condemned, and is contrary to the conditions on which he sought admission to Freemasonry.

His duty as a citizen must always prevail over any obligation to other Freemasons, and any attempt to shield a Freemason who has acted dishonourably or unlawfully is contrary to this prime duty.

## **Secrecy**

The secrets of Freemasonry are concerned with its traditional modes of recognition. It is not a secret society, since all members are free to acknowledge their membership and will do so in response to enquiries for respectable reasons. Its constitutions and rules are available to the public. There is no secret about any of its aims and principles. Like many other societies, it regards some of its internal affairs as private matters for its members.

## **Freemasonry and Politics**

Freemasonry is non-political, and the discussion of politics at Masonic meetings is forbidden.

## **Other Masonic Bodies**

Freemasonry is practised under many independent Grand Lodges with standards similar to those set by the United Grand Lodge of England.

There are some Grand Lodges and other apparently Masonic bodies that do not meet these standards, e.g. that do not require a belief in a Supreme Being, or that allow or encourage their members as such to participate in political matters.

These Grand Lodges and bodies are not recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England as being Masonically regular, and Masonic contact with them is forbidden.

## **Conclusion**

A Freemason is encouraged to do his duty first to his God (by whatever name he is known) through his faith and religious practice; and then, without detriment to his family and those dependent on him, to his neighbour through charity and service.

None of these ideas is exclusively Masonic, but all should be universally acceptable. Freemasons are expected to follow them.

# **FREEMASONRY: AN APPROACH TO LIFE**

## **What is Freemasonry?**

Freemasonry teaches moral lessons and self-knowledge through participation in a progression of allegorical two-part plays, which are learnt by heart and performed within each lodge.

Freemasonry offers its members an approach to life which seeks to reinforce thoughtfulness for others, kindness in the community, honesty in business, courtesy in society and fairness in all things. Members are urged to regard the interests of the family as paramount but importantly Freemasonry also teaches and practices concern for people, care for the less fortunate and help for those in need.

## **Why do people join and remain members?**

People become Freemasons for a variety of reasons, some as the result of family tradition, others upon the introduction of a friend or out of a curiosity to know what it is all about.

Those who become active members and who grow in Freemasonry do so principally because they enjoy it. They enjoy the challenges and fellowship that Freemasonry offers. There is more to it, however, than just enjoyment.

Participation in the dramatic presentation of moral lessons and in the working of a lodge provides a member with a unique opportunity to learn more about himself and encourages him to live in such a way that he will always be in search of becoming a better man, not better than someone else but better than he himself would otherwise be and therefore an exemplary member of society.

Each Freemason is required to learn and show humility through initiation. Then, by progression through a series of degrees he gains insight into increasingly complex moral and philosophical concepts, and accepts a variety of challenges and responsibilities which are both stimulating and rewarding. The structure and working of the lodge and the sequence of ceremonial events,

which are usually followed by social gatherings, offer members a framework for companionship, teamwork, character development and enjoyment of shared experiences.

### **What promises do Freemasons take?**

New members make solemn promises concerning their conduct in the lodge and society. These promises are similar to those taken in court or upon entering the armed services or many other organisations. Each member also promises to keep confidential the traditional methods of proving he is a Freemason which he would use when visiting a lodge where he is not known.

The much publicised 'traditional penalties' for failure to observe these undertakings were removed from the promises in 1986.

They were always symbolic not literal and refer only to the pain any decent man should feel at the thought of violating his word. Members also undertake not to make use of their membership for personal gain or advancement; failure to observe this principle or otherwise to fall below the standards expected of a Freemason can lead to expulsion.

### **Who can join?**

Membership is open to men of all faiths who are law-abiding, of good character and who acknowledge a belief in a Supreme being. Freemasonry is a multi-racial and multi-cultural organisation. It has attracted men of goodwill from all sectors of the community into membership. There are similar Masonic organisations for women.

### **Is Freemasonry a religion?**

Freemasonry is not a religion. It has no theology and does not teach any route to salvation. A belief in a Supreme being, however, is an essential requirement for membership and Freemasonry encourages its members to be active in their own religions as well as in society at large.

Although every lodge meeting is opened and closed with a prayer and its ceremonies reflect the essential truths and moral teachings

common to many of the world's great religions, no discussion of religion is permitted in lodge meetings.

### **Is Freemasonry a secret society?**

Freemasonry is not a secret society, but lodge meetings, like meetings of many other social and professional associations, are private occasions open only to members.

Freemasons are encouraged to speak openly about their membership, while remembering that they undertake not to use it for their own or anyone else's advancement. As members are sometimes the subject of discrimination which may adversely affect their employment or other aspects of their lives, some Freemasons are understandably reticent about discussing their membership. In common with many other national organisations, Grand Lodge maintains a list of members but will not disclose names or member's details without their permission.

In circumstances where a conflict of interest might arise or be perceived to exist or when Freemasonry becomes an issue, a Freemason must declare an interest.

The rules and aims of Freemasonry are available to the public. The Masonic Year Book, also available to the public, contains the names of all national office-holders and lists of all lodges with details of their meeting dates and places.

The meeting places and halls used by Freemasons are readily identifiable, are listed in telephone directories and in many areas are used by the local community for activities other than Freemasonry. Freemason's Hall in London is open to the public and 'open days' are held in many provincial centres.

The rituals and ceremonies used by Freemasons to pass on the principles of Freemasonry to new members were first revealed publicly in 1723. They include the traditional forms of recognition used by Freemasons essentially to prove their identity and qualifications when entering a Masonic meeting. These include handshakes which have been much written about and can scarcely be regarded as truly secret today; for medieval Freemasons, they were the equivalent of a 'pin number' restricting

access only to qualified members.

Many thousands of books have been written on the subject of Freemasonry and are readily available to the general public. Freemasonry offers spokesmen and briefings for the media and provides talks to interested groups on request. Freemasons are proud of their heritage and happy to share it.

### **Is Freemasonry involved in politics?**

Freemasonry is definitely not a political organisation, it has no political agenda, and discussion of politics is not permitted at lodge meetings.

Freemasonry naturally tends to attract those with a concern for people and a sense of social responsibility and purpose. There are members, therefore, who are involved in politics at local, national and international level. Equally there are members who take an active interest in non-Masonic charitable organisations and other community groups

### **Is Freemasonry involved in the community?**

From its earliest days, Freemasonry has been involved in charitable activities, and since its inception it has provided support for many widows and orphans of Freemasons as well as for others within the community.

All monies raised for charity are drawn from amongst Freemasons, their families and friends, while grants and donations are made to Masonic and non-Masonic charities alike.

Over the past five years alone Freemasonry has raised more than £75m for a wide range of charitable purposes including those involved in medical research, community care, education and work with young people.

Freemasonry has an enviable record of providing regular and consistent financial support to individual charities over long periods while at the same time making thousands of grants to local charities, appeals and projects throughout England and Wales each year. For the future, opportunities to obtain or provide matched funding are periodically examined with a view to

enhancing the impact of the support Freemasonry can give to specific projects. The personal generosity of Freemasons and the collective fundraising efforts of almost 8,000 lodges, however, will continue to determine the contribution Freemasonry makes within the community.

## **FREEMASONRY: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

### **Q What is Freemasonry?**

**A** Freemasonry is the UK's largest secular, fraternal and charitable organisation. It teaches moral lessons and self-knowledge through participation in a progression of allegorical two-part plays.

### **Q How many Freemasons are there?**

**A** Under the United Grand Lodge of England, there are 330,000 Freemasons, meeting in 8,644 lodges. There are separate Grand Lodges for Ireland (which covers north and south) and Scotland, with a combined membership of 150,000. Worldwide, there are probably 5 million members.

### **Q How and when did Freemasonry start?**

**A** It is not known. The earliest recorded 'making' of a Freemason in England is that of Elias Ashmole in 1646. Organised Freemasonry began with the founding of the Grand Lodge of England on 24 June 1717, the first Grand Lodge in the world. Ireland followed in 1725 and Scotland in 1736. All the regular Grand Lodges in the world trace themselves back to one or more of the Grand Lodges in the British Isles. There are two main theories of origin. According to one, the operative stonemasons who built the great cathedrals and castles had lodges in which they discussed trade affairs. They had simple initiation ceremonies and, as there were no City and Guilds certificates, dues cards or trade union membership cards, they adopted secret signs and words to demonstrate that they were trained masons when they moved from site to site.

In the 1600s, these operative lodges began to accept non-operatives as "gentlemen masons". Gradually these non-operative took over the lodges and turned them from operative to 'free and accepted' or 'speculative' lodges. The other theory is that in the late 1500s and early 1600s, there was a group which was interested in the promotion of religious and political tolerance in an age of great intolerance when differences of opinion on matters of religion and politics were to lead to bloody civil war.

In forming Freemasonry, they were trying to make better men and build a better world. As the means of teaching in those days was by allegory and symbolism, they took the idea of building as the central allegory on which to form their system.

The main source of allegory was the Bible, the contents of which were known to everyone even if they could not read, and the only building described in detail in the Bible was King Solomon's Temple, which became the basis of the ritual.

The old trade guilds provided them with their basis administration of a Master, Wardens, Treasurer and Secretary, and the operative mason's tools provided them with a wealth of symbols with which to illustrate the moral teachings of Freemasonry.

### **Q How many degrees are there in Freemasonry ?**

**A** Basic Freemasonry consists of the three 'Craft' degrees (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason) completed by the Royal Arch degree (Chapter). There are many other Masonic degrees and Orders which are called 'additional' because they add to the basis of the Craft and Royal Arch. They are not basic to Freemasonry but add to it by further expounding and illustrating the principles stated in the Craft and Royal Arch. Some of these additional degrees are numerically superior to the third degree but this does not affect the fact that they are additional to and not in anyway superior to or higher than the Craft. The ranks that these additional degrees carry have no standing with the Craft or Royal Arch.

### **Q What happens at a lodge meeting?**

**A** The meeting is in two parts. As in any association there is a certain amount of administrative procedure - minutes of last meeting, proposing and balloting for new members, discussing and voting on financial matters, election of officers, news and correspondence. Then there are the ceremonies for admitting new Masons and the annual installation of the Master and appointment of officers. The three ceremonies for admitting a new Mason are in two parts - a slight dramatic instruction in the principles and lessons taught in the Craft followed by a lecture in which the candidate's various duties are spelled out.

### **Q Isn't ritual out of place in modern society?**

**A** No. The ritual is a shared experience which binds the members together. Its use of drama, allegory and symbolism impresses the principles and teachings more firmly in the mind of each candidate than if they were simply passed on to him in matter-of-fact modern language.

### **Q Why do grown men run around with their trousers rolled up?**

**A** It is true that candidates have to roll up their trouser legs during the three ceremonies when they are being admitted to membership. Taken out of context, this can seem amusing, but like many other aspects of Freemasonry, it has a symbolic meaning.

### **Q Why do you wear regalia?**

**A** Wearing regalia is historical and symbolic and, like a uniform, serves to indicate to members where they rank in the organisation.

### **Q How much does it cost to be a Freemason?**

**A** It varies from lodge to lodge but anyone wishing to join can find a lodge to suit his pocket. On entry, there is an initiation fee and an apron to buy. A member pays an annual subscription to his lodge which covers his membership and the administrative cost of

running the lodge. It is usual to have a meal after the meeting; the cost of this can be included either in the annual subscription or paid for at the time. It is entirely up to the individual member what he gives to Charity, but it should always be without detriment to his other responsibilities. Similarly, he may join as many lodges as his time and pocket can allow as long as it does not adversely affect his family life and responsibilities.

**Q Why are you a secret society?**

**A** We are not, but lodge meetings, like those of many other groups, are private and open only to members. The rules and aims of Freemasonry are available to the public. Meeting places are known and in many areas are used by the local community for activities other than Freemasonry. Members are encouraged to speak openly about Freemasonry.

**Q What are the secrets of Freemasonry?**

**A** The secrets in Freemasonry are the traditional modes of recognition which are not used indiscriminately, but solely as a test of membership, e.g. when visiting a Lodge where you are not known.

**Q Why do Freemasons take oaths?**

**A** New members make solemn promises concerning their conduct in Lodge and in society. Each member also promises to keep confidential the traditional methods of proving that he is a Freemason which he would use when visiting a lodge where he is not known. Freemasons do not swear allegiances to each other or to Freemasonry. Freemasons promise to support others in times of need, but only if that support does not conflict with their duties to God, the law, their family or with their responsibilities as a Citizen.

**Q Why do your 'obligations' contain hideous penalties?**

**A** They no longer do. When Masonic ritual was developing in the late 1600s and 1700s it was quite common for legal and civil oaths to include physical penalties and Freemasonry simply followed the

practice of the times. In Freemasonry, however, the physical penalties were always symbolic and were never carried out. After long discussion, they were removed from the promises in 1986.

**Q Are Freemasons expected to prefer fellow Masons at the expense of others in giving jobs, promotions, contracts and the like?**

**A** Absolutely not. That would be a misuse of membership and subject to Masonic discipline. On his entry into Freemasonry each candidate states unequivocally that he expects no material gain from his membership. At various stages during the three ceremonies of his admission and when he is presented with a certificate from Grand Lodge that the admission ceremonies have been completed, he is forcefully reminded that attempts to gain preferment or material gain for himself or others is a misuse of membership which will not be tolerated.

The Book of Constitutions, which every candidate receives, contains strict rules governing abuse of membership which can result in penalties varying from temporary suspension to expulsion.

**Q Isn't it true that Freemasons only look after each other?**

**A** No. From its earliest days, Freemasonry has been involved in charitable activities. Since its inception, Freemasonry has provided support not only for widows and orphans of Freemasons but also for many others within the community. Whilst some Masonic charities cater specifically but not exclusively for Masons or their dependents, others make significant grants to non-Masonic organisations. On a local level, lodges give substantial support to local causes.

**Q Aren't you a religion or a rival to religion?**

**A** Emphatically not. Freemasonry requires a belief in God and its principles are common to many of the world's great religions. Freemasonry does not try to replace religion or substitute for it. Every candidate is exhorted to practise his religion and to regard its holy book as the unerring standard of truth. Freemasonry does

not instruct its members in what their religious beliefs should be, nor does it offer sacraments. Freemasonry deals in relations between men; religion deals in a man's relationship with his God.

**Q Why do you call it the VSL and not the Bible?**

**A** To the majority of Freemasons the Volume of the sacred Law is the Bible. There are many in Freemasonry, however, who are not Christian and to them the Bible is not their sacred book and they will make their promises on the book which is regarded as sacred to their religion. The Bible will always be present in an English lodge but as the organisation welcomes men of many different faiths, it is called the Volume of the Sacred Law. Thus, when the Volume of the Sacred Law is referred to in ceremonies, to a non-Christian it will be the holy book of his religion and to a Christian it will be the Bible.

**Q Why do you call God the Great Architect?**

**A** Freemasonry embraces all men who believe in God. Its membership includes Christians, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Parsees and others. The use of descriptions such as the Great Architect prevents disharmony. The Great Architect is not a specific Masonic god or an attempt to combine all gods into one. Thus, men of differing religions pray together without offence being given to any of them.

**Q Why don't some churches like Freemasonry?**

**A** There are elements within certain churches who misunderstand Freemasonry and confuse secular rituals with religious liturgy. Although the Methodist Conference and the General Synod of the Anglican Church have occasionally criticised Freemasonry, in both Churches there are many Masons and indeed others who are dismayed that the Churches should attack Freemasonry, an organisation which has always encouraged its members to be active in their own religion.

**Q Why will Freemasonry not accept Roman Catholics as members?**

**A** It does. The prime qualification for admission into Freemasonry has always been a belief in God. How that belief is expressed is entirely up to the individual. Four Grand Masters of English Freemasonry have been Roman Catholics. There are many Roman Catholic Freemasons.

**Q Isn't Freemasonry just another political pressure group?**

**A** Emphatically not. Whilst individual Freemasons will have their own views on politics and state policy, Freemasonry as a body will never express a view on either. The discussion of politics at Masonic meetings has always been prohibited.

**Q Are there not Masonic groups who are involved in politics?**

**A** There are groups in other countries who call themselves Freemasons and who involve themselves in political matters. They are not recognised or countenanced by the United Grand Lodge of England and other regular Grand Lodges who follow the basic principles of Freemasonry and ban the discussion of politics and religion at their meetings.

**Q Why don't you have women members?**

**A** Traditionally, Freemasonry under the United Grand Lodge of England has been restricted to men. The early stonemasons were all male, and when Freemasonry was organising, the position of women in society was different from today. If women wish to join Freemasonry, there are two separate Grand Lodges in England restricted to women only.

**Q What is the relationship between Freemasonry and groups like the Orange Order, Odd Fellows and Buffaloes?**

**A** None. There are numerous fraternal orders and Friendly Societies whose rituals, regalia and organisation are similar in some respects to Freemasonry's. They have no formal or informal connections with Freemasonry.

**Q Is Freemasonry an international Order?**

**A** Only in the sense that Freemasonry exists throughout the free world. Each Grand Lodge is sovereign and independent, and whilst following the same basic principles, may have differing ways of passing them on. There is no international governing body for Freemasonry.

**FREEMASONRY IN OXFORDSHIRE.**

English Freemasonry's governing body is the United Grand Lodge of England. For administrative purposes, the country is divided into the London area and 47 "Provinces", of which the Masonic Province of Oxfordshire is one.

Many lodges meet in other locations. Banbury, Bicester, Burford, Caversham, Chipping Norton, Henley-on-Thames, Thame, Witney and Woodstock. Many of the Masonic centres hold open days for the public to see the lodge rooms and engage in discussion. In all there are 56 Lodges in the Masonic Province of Oxfordshire, with a total membership of about 2230.

In addition to the lodge structure, there are sporting associations for golf, bowls, fishing and other country sports. There are various study groups, libraries, a museum and programmes of entertainment for ladies, such as lodge Ladies nights, gala evenings and talks or visits. Speakers are available to address meetings about Freemasonry.

## **Information contact details;**

The Oxfordshire Provincial Grand Lodge has a web site at [www.oxfordshiremansons.org](http://www.oxfordshiremansons.org) which is open to those with an internet connection and from which many other Masonic Internet sites can be accessed.

For more general Masonic information contact the Provincial Grand Secretary  
email on  
[secretary@oxfordshiremansons.org](mailto:secretary@oxfordshiremansons.org)

## **STILL INTERESTED?**

It is hoped that you have found the content of this booklet helpful as an introduction to English Freemasonry, of course there is much to know, of which there are many sources which you can research.

So if you are still interested, then why not make contact with your Proposer, or as suggested in this booklet on page 2. You will then be helped and guided hopefully to take the first steps to becoming an English Freemason.

We really look forward to meeting you.

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